

MENTION OF TIBETAN KINGS IN SOME DOCUMENTS FROM TUNHUANG

HUGH E. RICHARDSON

Compared with the fundamental contribution to the early history of Tibet in the Annals and Chronicles from Tunhuang the other manuscripts of which a large number are included in the invaluable *choix de Documents Tibétains* edited by Madame A. Spanien and M. Y. Imaeda although having much of social and administrative importance disclose little about the doings of the *btsan-pe* except in a formal religious context.

There is, however, a strange little fragment Pelliot Tibetan (Pell T) 1144 relating to the ill-fated Stag-bu snya-gzigs the grand-father of Srong-brtsan sgam-po. And in F.W. Thomas *Literary Texts and Documents* (TLTD) II p.53 the story of the rise and fall of the dynamic arriviste and intriguer Khyung-po Zu-tse who was accused of plotting against Srong-brtsan. Srong-brtsan is also named in a religious context together with his descendent Khri-Srong Lde-brtsan in No. 370 of the collection of Tibetan documents in the India Office Library as having brought the Buddhist doctrine to Tibet.

Khri-Lde-gtsug-brtsan is mentioned by implication in TLTD II p.9, a damaged and incomplete account of events in the vassal 'A-zha state where a Tibetan princess had married the ruler in 689 as the ruler who married a Chinese princess in 710. He is also referred to though not by name in the Li Yul Chos-kyi lo Rgyus as the religiously minded Tibetan ruler who married a Chinese princess and gave shelter in Tibet to monks from Khotan.

Khri-Srong Lde-Brtsan is named, as mentioned above, in the India Office Library Document No. 370, "A volume of the Dharma that came down from Heaven". He is presumably also the ruler in Pell T. 1091 a fragmentary text which I understand to concern the rising against the Tibetans at Sha-cu in about 797.

Khri Gtsug Lde-Brtsan (Ralpacan) is the *btsan-po* most frequently named in Tunhuang documents. Pell T. 100, although not all legible, appears to be the dedication to him of some religious works by a monk of a temple at Sha-cu, in which he is eulogized in the mystic language of kingship invoking the ancestral *Spu-rgyal*. In Pell T. 130 he is the beneficiary of a prayer which mentions his religious acts such as making images and founding temples. One of the dangers from which it is prayed he may be delivered-gza'-may mean epilepsy as I suggested in a note in BSOAS 1961. It is known from Chinese sources that he suffered continually from illness.

Pell T. 132 is a long prayer in which his name appears, almost casually, near the end.

In TLTD II. pp. 93,96,98 he is associated with the building of a temple in the border region by his generals to celebrate the establishment of peace there.

Pell T. 735 and 1088 which are not in Choix de Documents, name him, in the first, as having religious texts copied for his benefit, and in second which is a small fragment, in association with one of his ministers, Brgya-Byin.

Pell T. 1123 is another long prayer for his benefit. Pell 1290 is a rather confused document which has been examined by Madame Spanien in *Etudes Tibetaines*, pp. 317. It seems to me to be an exercise, copying passages from a number of different documents. In it there is a song by the great monk minister Yon Tan (Bran-ka dpal-gyi yon-tan) on the occasion when the king's name was changed from Mu-tsu to Khri-Gtsug lde-brtsan. A dragon year of the skyid-rtag era which Khri-Gtsug-lde-brtsan took for his reign following a Chinese model, is mentioned. That should be 826 as 812 would be too early according to the view that he succeeded to the throne in 816. The problem cannot be discussed here.

No. 637 in the India Office Library collection mentioning a dpal lha btsan-po probably refers to him. He is seen as ordering the translation of religious texts by the pandits Jnanagarbha and Cog-ro klu'i rgyal-mtshan. The latter is assigned by later histories to the reign of Ralpacan. Finally Pell T. 999 names him together with 'Od-srung as receiving the dedication of copies of religious texts from religious leaders of Sha-cu who also gave a banquet in his honour.

Khri-Gtsug lde-brtsan's successor and reputedly assassin, Khri-'U'i dun-brtan is the beneficiary of a long prayer in Pell T. 134 and I take it that he is also the 'U-rum dpal in Pell T. 83 Mlle Lalou's *Inventaire de manuscrits Tibetains de Touen houang*. It is not reproduced in Choix de documents so I have not been able to check whether 'U-rum is perhaps 'U-dum. The btsan-po's name in the Tunhuang Chronicle is given as 'U' i dum-brtan. These prayers may seem surprising in view of the later reputation of Glang-darma ('U' i dum-brtan) as the ruthless persecutor of Buddhism and having connived at the assassination of Ralpacan.

Although the tradition is often confused, there is general agreement that for part of his reign—six months according to most, but two years in the history of Dpa'-bo Gtsug-Lag- Darma ruled righteously, after which wicked ministers brought about suppression of the faith. In only one of the documents from Tunhuang-No.752 in the India Office collection—is there a possible reference to that; a fragment praying that disturbances may cease, ends with the hope that the enemy (or enemies) of the rdo-rje thegpa, the Vajrayana, may be frustrated. On the other hand Pell T. 840 which is edited by Mr. Samten Karmay in a contribution to Tantric studies in honour of R.A. Stein. Louva in 1981, states that the holy religion (Dam-Chos) flourished in the time of the *lha-sras* Dar-ma and his nephew (*Dbon-sras*) 'Od-srung.

Perhaps in Central Tibet there was hostility to the practitioners of a particular form of doctrine and it is probable that an end was put to the extensive privileges and donations granted to monasteries by Ralpacan and to the political activities of monks including elevation to the highest offices of state, which had offended the conservative nobility.

But whatever may have happened there, it is evident that Buddhism not only survive in the north-eastern provinces of the Tibetan kingdom but also had the protection of the administration regardless of its persecution in neighbouring China between 842 and 848.

All this time the country was wracked by violent fighting between rival ministers. Shangkungje of Dba's was out for himself, while Shangpipi of 'bro whose family had long connections with the Tibetan royal house and whose origin was in the neighbourhood of Sha-cu, can be seen as supporting 'Darma's successor 'Od-srung for whom and for his mother the lady 'Phan prayers continued to be offered.

In Pell T. 999 as mentioned above, 'Od-srungs' name is linked with that of Khri-Gtsug lde-brtsan. The religious dignitary principally responsible for the offering was the abbot Rong-ben (Hong pien) who later led the return of the Chinese of Sha-cu to allegiance to the Chinese Emperor on the collapse of the Tibetan authority in 850. Pell T. 131 is a long, florid, prayer for 'Od-srung and his mother. As it is complete I have translated it below to show the way such things were written. There is also what may be an interesting point near the end in the mention of a brother.

Pell T. 230 is fragmentary prayer also for them. Enough survives to identify it as alluding to the troubles of the time and it seems worth while to attempt a translation I have done below :

Pelliot Tibetain No. 131 : Offered as a prayer. To the Tathāgatas dwelling in the three ages, and all the Buddhas who have subdued their enemies and are fully perfected in the boundless regions of the world of ten directions, reverence. To these purified by the essence of the doctrine, who are separated from all action, to those excellent beings who possess the good fortune of natural knowledge and have turned to the way of the highest knowledge, reverence. To the saintly clergy of unchanging nature, the field of merit of all gods and men, to all those spiritual sons who represent the lineage of the Tathagata wherever they may be to them also reverence. To Tshangs-Pa the lord of all who endure suffering, and to Brgya-byin powerful among the gods who protect the faith of the three ages and maintain the abode of the departed Buddhas wherever they may be, and to those who act as chief of the kings of the gods, reverence. To the four great kings etcetera, the ten protectors of the world who guard the four continents in trust and have promised by their might and magic power over the gods and nagas, the demons and spirits who act to disturb the world, to prevent them from causing confusion and, in order to keep them under control, to maintain and protect the kingdom by their powers, to those

generals of the gods, chiefs of the world, to them also reverence. With concentration in our minds presenting to those holy ones offerings, garlands of pure flowers, cymbals, scented incense powder, butter lamps, gifts, dainties, grain riches, horses etcetera, the wealth of gods and men, with whatever errors there may be proceeding from our body, speech or mind being purified by the saints, with honour and respect and further with increasing agreement with the religious edicts in the time of the ancestors of the *lha sras* which dispel hostility towards the Three Jewels, we all high and low with humble submission saddened by our desires, further confused by the shame of our thoughts, repenting with all our heart and making confession with all the saints as witnesses and praying that we may not act so in future, we have made this vow. We rejoice in all that tends to increase the two-fold accumulation of virtue and pray that all the saints who have achieved deliverance from action by their good deeds may by the power of their compassion not abandon the world and realising in their mind the infinity of the universe, will remain for the sake of sentient beings. And we beg that all those saints who dwell in their appointed abodes will swiftly turn the wheel of the Dharma and guarding all Tibet will give orders for its protection. May 'phags-pa Rnam-thos-sras, the Lord of Lcang-lo Palace, revealing the manner of his dwelling in the centre of Ri-rab, also come to the world outside and by his power perform the task of destroying by his frown the *Gnod-sbyin* hordes and may he take a vow to protect and guard the doctrine of the Buddhas of the three ages wherever it may be found. And may Arya 'Jam-ba'-la, being our support, promise to bestow wealth in the highest perfection on those who seek enjoyment in the world according to their wishes, and from time to time may appear and establish virtue in the world, and according to his promise may perform good deeds in addition to those listed. And for the great king of all Tibet who dwells at Lha-dum-bal, "Od-srung of the house of the lady queen "Phan, together with his subjects and court we uttering his name and further supporting him by offering our bodies and lives, making this prayer that he may be endowed with all good, pray especially for his protection. If it does not turn out well according to our hopes, dedicating it to the brother as we have promised, and giving into your hands the life and dominion of the *btsan-po lha-sras*, the mother and son, their subjects and our life and existence also, we pray that by your power you will promise to uphold and maintain them and just as we pray, will bestow on them the gift of the wish-fulfilling tree.

Notes

1. *dkar-cag* is unusual in this context; it is seen elsewhere in early documents as meaning a list of crop payments.
2. This strange statement, if I understand it rightly, seems to imply that some danger threatened 'Od-srung and shows also that he had a brother. It is possible that a brother is implied in Pell T. 1132—**yum sras mched 'phrul gyi snga nas, and yum sras mched dgung dang 'dra ba'i zha snga naa**. This might underlie the later tradition of rivalry by two claimants by different mothers—'od-srung and Yum-brtan. I have questioned the existence of the latter in my article "Who was Yum-brtan" in *Études Tibetaines*, 1971.

Pelliot Tibetain No. 230 measuring 14 cm. by 22 cm is the left part of a manuscript which, judging by examples of complete documents, may have been twice as wide. I have translated what is possible for surviving half-lines. Where there are isolated words, unintelligible out of context, I have usually transcribed the Tibetan. The lines, apart from the first, are of virtually equal length.

In spite of the fragmentary nature of the documents there is enough to allow some not unreasonable speculation about the contents of the whole. The first six lines are general prayer. In line seven 'Od-srung and his mother, for whose benefit the document is presumably dedicated, are named. The following eleven lines record the religious deeds done by or on behalf of the ruler. The nineteenth line onwards contain several references to disloyal subjects; and the document concludes with prayers for loyalty among subjects and peace and prosperity for the ruler and all Tibet.

This can be seen as referring to the disorder which followed the murder of Glang-darma and the troubled accession of 'Od-srung leading, as recorded in the new Tang Annals, to fierce fighting in the border regions between Shangkungje of Mo (Dba's?) and Shangpi of Mulu or Mo lo (Bro?) respectively opponent and supporter of the new regime. That continued until 849 when Shangpi, whose resources were exhausted, retired to the west of the Kan chou prefecture.

Translation :

1. Being purified from all...
2. and/the merit of all the virtuous deeds of various men...
3. Chad la/exhortation to turn the wheel of dharma to the highest degree...
4. to those who desire/for the benefit of many beings/in the world *yu*
5. by the firm power from those who protect the doctrine of the holy one guarding(?)...
6. by all/abiding in the excellent way/of many beings...
7. will be made firm/in this way the lha-sras Khri 'Od-srungs, the ruler and his mother (btsan yum for btsan-yum ?)...
8. rejoicing as the result of confessing sins/giving encouragement prayer...
9. many mandalas from the centre and outer regions according to the mantra...
10. merit and/guiding many men to deliverance and/ of the saints...
11. the merit of setting of images and opening their eyes, and...
12. offering a banquet/the merit of offering many religious donations...
13. also/the great minister who raises up the dominion of the ruler and people of Tibet (*rjes 'bangs* for *rje-'bangs*?)
14. escorted by many clergy/by the single minded thought of many...
15. The '*Bum* etc./and many sutras and mantras *kl* (*klog* ?)...

16. and/and acting according to the *Hom* mantra of the fierce deities/the *dkyil 'khor* (?) of the planets...
17. and/the chief of those who have passed from the world/power and vows...
18. the merit of etc./others also/subjects...
19. *zhing*/actions contrary to orders and the law/great punishment...
20. giving and edict by the power of the compassion of the lady mother...
21. *Po* by those who know the means/stern repression...
22. uniting the internal administration/disloyal subjects punishment and (*byor*)...
23. from above/causing the subjects to be reconciled/establishing happiness in tranquility...
24. in the presence of the mighty (*brtsan* for *btsan*?) mother and son/enjoying long life (maintaining ?) the kingdom...
25. rule over the subjects with increasing glory for ever/'*bangs* (?)
26. harmful spells of etcetera/demons that attack the body/evil omens *la stogs-pa*...
27. *ni*/increasing its firmness for ever/petition for spreading it by good...
28. in the manner of a (*chos-skyong*) *ba'i* religion protecting king/religion to all the world...
29. by changing their minds/these who turn to the disloyal path...
30. giving up uncertainty? (*g-yo bor nas*) /in future according to the manner of subjects (*rjes-'bangs*, perhaps for *rje 'bangs*, ruler and subjects).
31. praying for continual blessings (*mtud* for *btud*)/the *lha sras* and his ancestors...
32. by seeking the loyalty of the subjects/watching over the person and dominion of the ruler...
33. *sgro-nas*? *sgo nas* ? having discussed, or by the door/receiving happiness in their winds/agreeing with one thought...
34. not harming by evil spells etc. and/method...
35. accomplishing/the while land of Tibet peace and/(freedom from) illness...

The above are the only references to the Tibetan kings which I have been able to find.